[English]

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : The hon. Minister in his reply has said that the rate in supply of energy of different nuclear power stations to the State Electricity Boards during the last few years has increased as per the Eighth Plan, particularly in Rajasthan from 61 paise to 206 paise whereas in Kakrapar, on the contrary, it has decreased from 207 paise to 204 paise.

MR. SPEAKER : Is it necessary for you to read the answer?

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : I am reading it in order to pinpoint my question.

MR. SPEAKER : You can pinpoint it without reading the answer.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : What are the reasons for this? Rajasthan is a place which in the set up of deserts and other things is backward. While trying to increase the cost of energy, what is the Government of India going to do regarding reduction in the cost of energy, if not subsidy? What steps are they going to take to see that the people of Rajasthan can get cheap electricity?

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH : The nuclear power plants have been going through programmes of modernisation which involve capital investment and also because of the requirements of safety. There has been de-rating of capacities and that has a consequential impact on the unit cost of power.

SHRI SANAT MEHTA : I would like to ask only a very short question... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Listen to the question and not to the comments.

SHRI SANAT MEHTA :The Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices has considered the fuel scenario and it has recommended that the State which are beyond 600 km. to 800 km. From the coal mines be allowed the import of coal and other fuels when the Government has already announced OGL policy on coal. Will the Ministry of Power, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, try to reduce the duty on coal? Otherwise, the benefit of OGL import of coal is not able to reduce the cost of power in States which are 800km. Beyond the mines.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH : There is a very marginal import duty on coal.

SHRI SANAT MEHTA : It is very easy to remove if it is very marginal.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH : There are some considerations also in trying to be fair to the domestic coal industry and they are not revenue losses. But generally the Ministry of Power is in favour of as little taxation as possible on energy sources.

MR. SPEAKER : The other Ministers are jealous of the Minister for Power now !

Appointment of Railway Ticket Reservation Agents

*325. SHRI CHINTAMAN WANAGA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have appointed railway ticket reservation agents in the country;

(b) if so, whether the Government have received any complaints regarding misuse of tickets by rail travellers service agents; and

(c) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to curb the misuse of tickets?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) Rail Travellers Service Agents have been appointed on the Railways to purchase tickets from the railway reservation offices on behalf of the intending passengers by standing in the queue like a normal passenger.

(b) and (c) Some irregularities have been noticed regarding functioning of Rail Travellers Service Agents during the checks conducted in reservation offices from time to time by commercial Officers with the assistance of ticket checking staff, anti-fraud squad and Railway Protection Force. Frequent checks are conducted on the premises of Rail Traveller's Service Agents to see if any irregularities are committed by them and appropriate action is taken in case of irregularities detected.

SHRI CHINTAMAN WANAGA : I had asked about the appointment of agents for Railway ticket reservation but the hon. Minister has given a reply about Rail Travellers Service Agents. The duty of Rail travellers service agents is to provide tickets to those passengers who stand in the queue for reservation.

My question is whether the hon. Minister proposes to appoint agents on the pattern of private reservation agents of airlines?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : What type of agents you want to talk about.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Can you kindly repeat the question slowly?

SHRI CHINTAMAN WANAGA : There is a difference between the Rail Travellers' Service Agents and the Ticket Reservation Agents.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the duty of railway travellers agents is to provide tickets for those passenger who standing in a long queue. Does the hon. Minister want to appoint agents on the pattern of airlines agents?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not know about the type of agents in airlines. But the agents who buy railway tickets, people used to buy ticket from them in an unauthorised manner and the railways used to take action against them. As per the directions of Supreme Court in 1985, for the convenience of such passengers who are unable to buy tickets in the queue, these agents have been appointed to procure tickets for them on their behalf. But the authority to sell tickets lies only with the railways and such tickets can only be sought by authorised agents.

SHRI CHINTAMAN WANAGA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, while asking my second supplementary, I would like to tell that half of the passengers belong to Mumbai..... *(Interruptions)*

11.57 hrs.

At this stage, some slogans from the Public Gallery were heard

....(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please asks the question.

....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : They will take care of it. I know of it. It happens.

.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : He is asking this question.

[Translation]

SHRI CHINTAMAN WANAGA : Half of the railway passengers in the country belong to Mumbai. If you happen to go to any of the railway stations you will find very long queue of passengers standing to buy tickets. One has to stand in waiting in the queue for hours together. So my question is whether then hon. Minister proposes to appoint railway travellers service agents for current booking railway tickets in Mumbai.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Whenever such requirements are felt, the railways make advertisements for appointment of such agents.

SHRI MANGAT RAM SHARMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Railways whether it is a fact that the people of Jammu-Kashmir and particularly the people of eastern States where railways have not reached fully in the whole state have to face lots of difficulties in procuring tickets.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : What can I do? Please ask the question now. Time is not there.

[Translation]

SHRI MANGAT RAM SHARMA : I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether any booking office is proposed to be set up in those areas where the railway station are at a long distance so that people of such areas may get railway ticket and reservation easily. For example in Jammu-Kashmir there are areas like Doda, Sri Nagar Valley, Leh. Poonch, Rojouri but there is only one railway station i.e. in Jammu only. Due to this people from distant areas have to face lots of difficulties in procuring tickets by coming to Jammu. Does he propose to open railway ticket booking counters in distant areas so that people may buy railway ticket easily.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Such ticket booking counters are already being opened and the area where railways have not reached so far in North Eastern States there also reservation facilities have been provided.

12.00 hrs.

We have also made arrangements for computerised ticket booking in Kashmir. We would also provide ticket-booking facility in the place which the hon. member has mentioned here, I request him to kindly send us the proposal in regard to those places and we shall look into that.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Internet Users

*326. SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI :
SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that thousands of internet users in the country have been making international phone calls through the internet telephone system for the last few years;

(b) if so, the details of losses to the exchequer during each of the last three years till date; and

(c) the measures taken or proposed to be taken to check such losses of revenue?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Extensive use of Internet Telephony is not possible at present in India due to technical constraints and high costs. The voice which can be derived is uncommercial & unreliable and requires use of costly equipment. This is further restricted due to legal bindings on the Internet users against any misuse.